

Tree song trilogy

Two trees holding a forest full of creatures and things. If you look closely, you will find a singing bird, a listening chameleon, two spiderwebs, two worms, one snake, some life-giving raindrops and a few hearts; all hidden among exotic leaves and curly branches.

You can make this very personal by adding your own favourite creatures, or by carving names and messages onto the tree trunks. The three frames complete the picture, but one will stand just as proudly on its own. With a bit of creative tweaking, you can continue the growth of the tree into more than a trilogy.

This is an intricate design, using mainly high relief combined with raised low relief and indented low relief. It is not very difficult, as we use all three techniques in their straightforward way (no breaking the rules here) but being an intricate pattern, it will take a little longer than most of the patterns in the book. The trick with this project is to work constantly at keeping the background flat, as the background consists of lots of small, irregular spaces in-between raised areas.

My frames measure 15 cm x 15 cm. The space for the photograph measures 4 cm x 4 cm. The size of your frame can be proportionately larger or smaller. Check the size of the design at the back of the book and photocopy it to the correct size. Most manufactures of superwood blanks will make them to your specifications.

You will need

3 superwood picture frames
 pewter
 pencil and tracing paper
 hardboard
 masking tape
 lubricant
 2 pieces of felt
 tracer tool
 paper pencil
 flattened paper pencil or
 hockey-stick tool
 teaspoon
 beeswax and glass dropper
 turpentine
 cotton wool
 patina
 materials for polishing
 (see end of the project)
 craft knife and cutting mat
 glue

1. Measure your frame and add 1 cm plus the measurement of the thickness of the frame to all four sides to allow for the overlap at the back. Cut a piece of pewter this size. (Do not cut out the central section where the photograph will go.)

2. Photocopy the designs from the back of the book to the correct size for your frames. Place the photo frame onto the tracing paper, draw around the outside of the frame and draw around the photograph gap. Trace the designs onto tracing paper, making sure they fit into the outlines of the frame.

3. Trace the designs onto the front of the pewter as for high relief. Now trace the lines demarcating the outside of the frame onto the pewter, as these lines form the edge of the tree trunks and branches, but do not trace the inner photograph hole onto the pewter. Remove all tracing paper and all masking tape. (See crafter's notes.)

DETAILS ON THE TRUNKS AND BRANCHES

1. The snake, the worm, the leaves, the heart and the outside edge of the fallen branches are raised higher than the tree trunks and branches. Mould these areas out before moulding out the trunk of the tree, to ensure good definition. They will all be moulded out using the pointy paper pencil, except for the stems of the leaves – use the tracer tool for these.





2. Neaten up around these areas on the hardboard, first with the pointy paper pencil and then with the tracer tool. When these areas have been completed, mould out the tree trunk: use the teaspoon in the wider areas and the flattened paper pencil in the narrower areas. Once the wax is in, you will need to redefine these areas.

CURLY SHOOTS

1. These are the thin spirals growing from the trunks and branches. You will find two of them at the bottom of the trees just above the ground line. They are done in raised low relief. Place the pewter (wrong-side up) onto a single piece of felt. Using the tracer tool, 'draw' the curly shoots.

2. Turn the pewter over (right-side up) onto a hardboard, neaten up on each side of the design line

with the pointy paper pencil, and then neaten up using the tracer tool. The paper pencil will feel a little clumsy and thick – do the best you can with it to flatten the pewter on each side of the raised line. The tracer tool will give you a crisp finish. If you neaten up with the tracer first, there is a chance you will cut through the pewter.

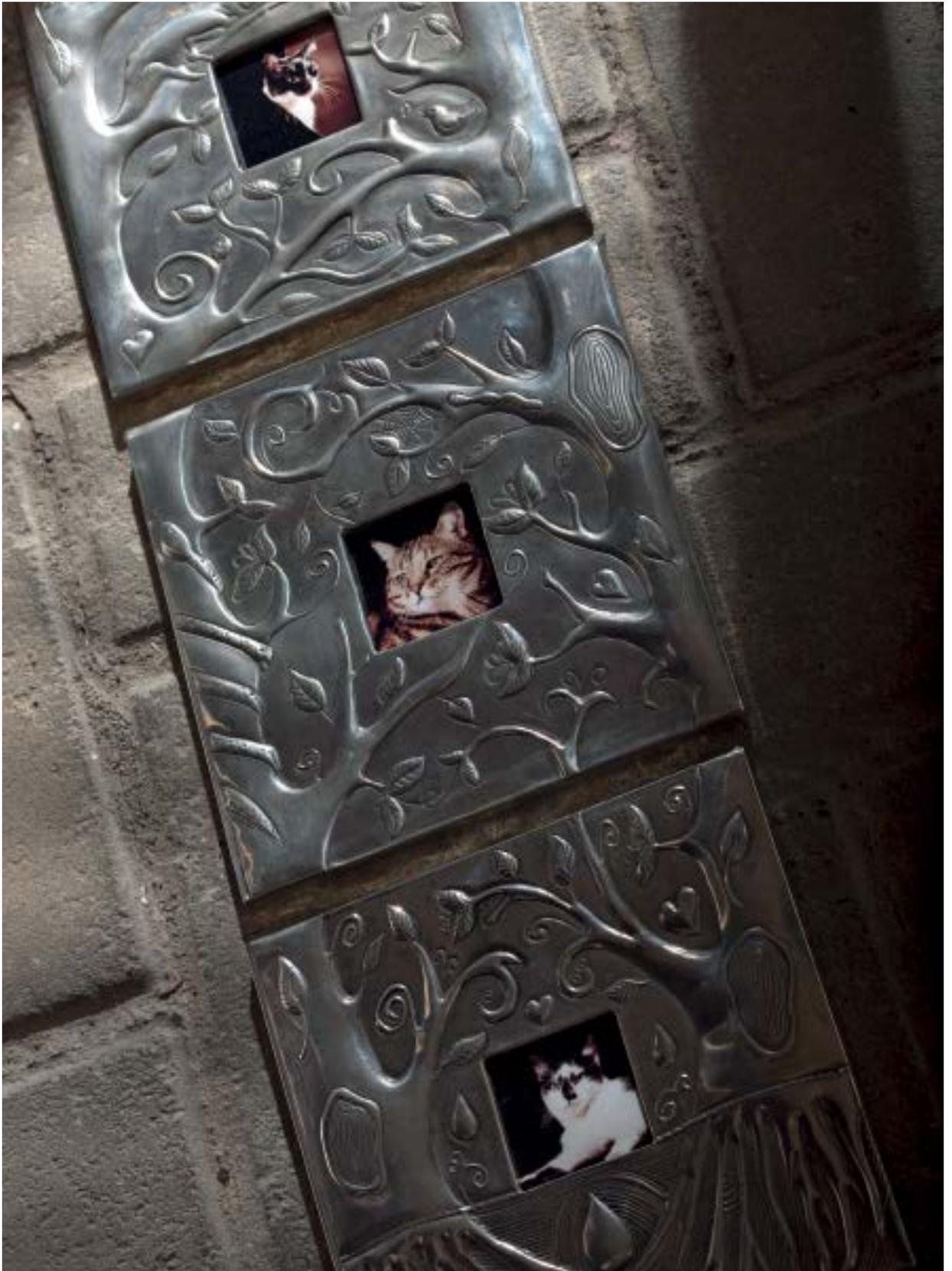
ROOTS, TREE TRUNKS, BRANCHES AND LEAVES

1. These are all done in high relief. Take the tree trunks, roots and branches out very slowly. The trunks – which are the largest area of the design – will stretch very quickly.

2. The roots and branches are far narrower than the trunks and so the pewter in these areas cannot stretch out as far. These are areas to watch for buckling: if the trunks

are pushed out too much compared to the roots and branches, the area where they join will buckle. *Note – the trunks on all three frames must be moulded to the same height as they are one continuous tree.*









BIRD, RAINDROPS, HEART AND CHAMELEON

1. These are all done in high relief. When working on the chameleon, you need to keep the line between it and the branch at surface level. There is a little rounded, triangular area between the bend of its front leg and the branch. This is part of the background. Keep it at surface level. The feet must be raised slightly higher than the branch.

2. Once the wax is in, you will need to redefine the details on the chameleon, and the wing of the bird.



FREEHAND AREAS

1. The underground which forms the background to the roots is done freehand. You can use your imagination here or copy the basic pattern I have used. The insides of the fallen-off branch areas on the trunk are done freehand, using a spiral, following the shape of the raised outer edge. You may find it easier to do the veins on all the leaves freehand rather than tracing them.

2. Fill the back with wax and clean off any excess wax with turpentine on cotton wool. Using the tracer tool, redefine the necessary areas.

3. Patina and polish.

4. Cover the frames. See *Pretty Flowers* frame on page 88 for instructions on how to cover the frames.

Crafter's notes

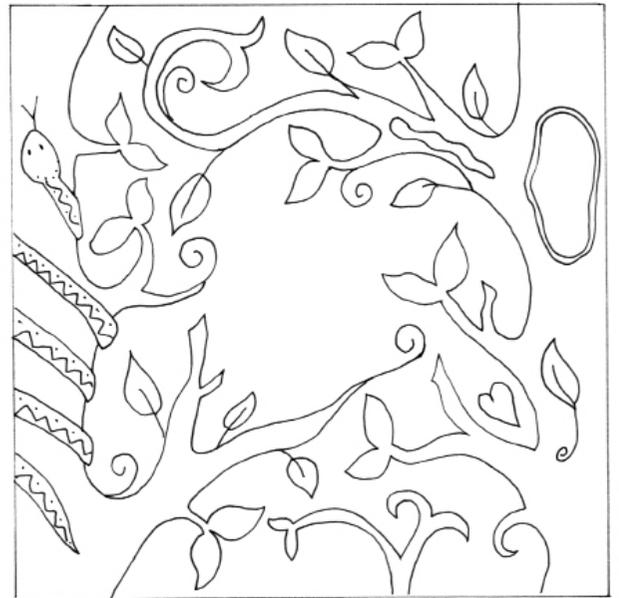
- This is an intricate design, so trace the entire design onto the pewter in step 1, including all the raised and indented low-relief areas.

- Remember to keep the background flat at all times; it will become raised as you mould the areas around it. You can flatten it using your finger or the side of the pointy paper pencil. Hold the paper pencil on its side, using the cone shape area of the point.

- A fine scribble pattern on the background will accentuate the main picture. It will also improve your fine motor skills.

- If your superwood frames do not have a hanging mechanism on the back, purchase some from your local hardware store and glue them onto the back using silicon glue or an epoxy putty.





Polishing process

The polishing is the final process. This is done to antique the pewter. The patina and polish will sit darkest in the indented areas of the design, giving it depth. For this reason, all relief work and all final indented designs must be done before polishing, as they will not show up if done after polishing. I must add at this point that I spend more time teaching people how to polish with metal polish than how to work with pewter, but with a little practice you will get it right.

You will need

completed pewter design
hardboard
cotton wool
turpentine
tissues
degreaser (baby powder)
rubber or latex gloves
patina
household metal polish

1. Place the completed pewter design (right-side up) onto hardboard. Clean the front of the pewter with a piece of cotton wool and turpentine. Wipe clean with a tissue. Dip a piece of cotton wool into the baby powder and rub gently over the front of the design to remove all grease. *Note – the patina will not take where there is grease.*



2. Wearing the gloves, absorb patina onto a small piece of cotton wool and apply evenly over the entire piece of pewter. Rinse off in clean water to neutralise the effect of the patina. Pat dry with a tissue. *Note – the metal will become very*

dark as you apply the patina, but it will lighten once polished.



3. Place the pewter (right-side up) onto hardboard. Absorb a little metal polish onto a piece of cotton wool and rub over the pewter. Buff off gently with a clean piece of cotton wool. Replace the cotton wool once the piece you are using becomes black. *Note – it is almost impossible to buff off dry metal polish without going through the tin layer of the pewter. Always remove dry polish with wet polish. Rub a little polish on a small area, then buff until shiny. Once the polish dries, apply a little more wet polish and buff. Move onto the next small area and work the same way. Do not rub hard, as you will go through the top tin layer, exposing the one underneath.*





Crafter's notes

- The patina does not protect the metal in any way. It is done purely for aesthetics. If you want to leave the pewter in its shiny state, you do not have to patina or polish. You can just degrease to clean up the front of the pewter design.
- If you want to, you can patina more than once, but the pewter will become extremely dark the second time.
- The longer the patina is left on the pewter, the darker it will become. You may rinse it off straight away or leave it on up to 20 minutes. Experiment with different times to see the effects. You can also dilute the patina with water to lessen the effect.
- Do not rub hard when applying the patina, or when polishing, as you may rub through the shiny tin layer.
- If you want the indented areas to be darker, try polishing with black coal stove polish. This polish does not remove the patina, so use after you have shined up the pewter with the metal polish.
- Do not get patina onto metal tools; it will cause them to rust. If this happens, rinse in clean water.



MASS PRODUCING DESIGNS FOR CARDS AND GIFT TAGS

Polishing lots of little designs is no pewter's idea of fun. When wanting to make lots of little embellishments for cards or gift tags, trace all the little designs onto one large piece of pewter. Finish off the designs as you wish, in high or low relief, fill them all with wax and then patina and polish the large piece of pewter. Once you have completed the polishing process, cut out the individual designs. This will save you lots of polishing time.

Of course, if you want to use up all your little scrap pieces of pewter, this idea won't work, but see if you can get more than one design onto your scrap piece as you will then polish once and not twice.